DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 176 CS 208 867

AUTHOR Hudson, Sally A.
TITLE Context and Children's Writing.
PUB DATE 1 Mar 85
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Language; Elementary Education; *Environmental Influences; Family Influence; Teacher Influence; Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; *Writing Research; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Contextual Analysis; Promising Practices; Writing Attitudes; *Writing Contexts

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine children's developing perceptions of contextual factors surrounding their writing at home and at school. Subjects were 20 children from grades one through five, who wrote in a wide range of contexts. Children's writing products for three months were labeled for ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre, during interviews conducted every three weeks. Based on these interview data, categories of five contextual factors were defined. The products and categories of the 10 most extensive writers were further analyzed to examine the range of audiences, purposes, and genres occurring by grade level within three common writing situations: (1) spontaneous writing at home, (2) spontaneous writing at school, and (3) assigned writing primarily at school. At all grades children cited more audiences, purposes, and genres for their spontaneous writing than for assigned writing. While the number of categories remained fairly stable after grade 1 for assigned writing, the number cited for spontaneous writing generally increased across grade levels. Within spontaneous writing, the number of categories listed for each factor moved from emphasis at home in grade one to school by grade three and back to both settings by grade five. The results suggest that restructuring the classroom to allow for real, rather than assigned, constraints may allow children more natural and extensive development as writers. (A list of categories of contextual factors is appended.) Tables of findings are included. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED258176

Context and Children's Writing

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sally Ann Hudson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Submitted for the NCTE Promising Researcher Award Competition
March 1, 1985

Dr. Sally A. Hudson
Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614
(319) 273-2821

CS208867

Context and Children's Writing

ABSTRACT

This study examined children's developing perceptions of contextual factors surrounding their writing at home and at school. Twenty children, two boys and two girls at each grade 1 through 5, were selected as avid self-sponsored writers. With the aide of parents and teachers, children collected their written products for three months. In interviews every three weeks, they labeled each product for ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre. From this interview data, categories of these five contextual factors were defined. The products and categories of the ten most extensive writers were further analyzed to examine the range of audiences, purposes, and genres occurring by grade level within three common writing situations: self-sponsored writing at home, self-sponsored writing at school, and assigned writing primarily in school. At all grades, children cited more audiences, purposes, and genres for their self-sponsored writing than for that which was assigned. While the number of categories remained fairly stable after grade 1 for assigned writing, the number cited for self-sponsored writing generally increased across grade levels. Within self-sponsored writing, the number of categories listed for each factor moved from emphasis at home in grade 1 to school by grade 3 and back to both settings by grade 5. Implications for teaching and further research in the contexts of children's writing are discussed.

> Day each that we tumble into the glass he sez to me, "Lets too badly that you someday fright preach Engfish."

The young college student above, sharing her mimicry of Joyce with a professor, gave English teachers a name for the prose they often encounter. That professor, Ken Macrorie, defines the "Engfish" of the schools as "a feel-nothing, say-nothing language, dead like Latin, devoid of the rhythms of contemporary speech. A dialect in which words are almost never 'attached to things'" (1970, p. 18). Yet young children write in fresh, often pleasantly surprising language. Through the elementary grade years, children are taught, directly or indirectly, to channel their writing to the limited context of writing for a teacher's evaluation.

Recent developments in the teaching of writing have refocused our attention away from products alone and toward the writer and the wider contexts which give rise to writing. Through observations in home or school settings, researchers are finding that many children write by choice and that this self-sponsored writing differs dramatically from assigned writing in school. However, research has only begun to examine the contexts of young children's writing. The present study, a description of children's developing views of the contexts surrounding their writing, examines five contextual factors (ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre) from the perspectives of children in grades 1 through 5. The range of categories occurring within these factors and comparisons of common writing situations across grade levels are presented.

In defining context, we make an assumption about the locus of context, that is, whether context resides in the text, the writer, the situational factors surrounding the writing, or some combination of these. Harste and

Carey (1984) suggest that components of the situation outside the writer and the text, "contextual constraints," are interpreted by the writer as "cognitive constraints." In the present study, context is thus defined as the circumstances surrounding the act of writing including components of the situation as well as constraints of the situation as the writer perceives them.

Background

Previous studies of children's writing attended only tangentially to the contexts of writing. However, three lines of research have contributed to our present knowledge: 1) rhetorically-based analyses of products or assignments, 2) process-centered observational research, and 3) ethnographic studies of the sociology of literacy.

Both Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975) and Applebee (1978) found that the school setting limited audiences and functions for writing, although students seemed capable of more abstract levels of both. These researchers' rhetorical definitions of function and audience, emphasizing writer-reader interactions, may however be less appropriate for the writing of younger children. For example, Britton et al. identify, but only minimally discuss, two function categories, practice-play and immature writing, which other researchers have expanded upon for younger writers (Whale & Robinson, 1978; Gundlach, Litowitz, & Moses, 1979). We are unsure what categories of function and audience might arise for assigned writing of younger children or if writing is similarly limited at lower grades.

Researchers concerned with writers' processes generally observe writing behaviors seeking information about how writers write and how they view their writing experiences. Often, however, these researchers comment on

the interaction between writing and situation, especially as to whether the writer is working under self-sponsored or assigned conditions.

From observations of and interviews with proficient twelfth-grade students, Emig (1971) found that assigned writing on specified topics was primarily "extensive", focusing upon the writer's conveyance of a message to another, usually the teacher. On the other hand, self-sponsored writing about self-selected topics was mainly "reflexive", focusing upon the writer's own thoughts and feelings concerning his or her experiences and often directed to a peer audience. However, she also notes that self-sponsored writing was addressed to parents and teachers when these students were younger, suggesting a developmental shift in audience focus. Like researchers engaged in product analysis and others examining processes (Birnbaum, 1981; Graves, 1973), Emig found assigned writing to be limited by the teacher, but she also adds that self-sponsored writing is generally more wide-ranging. However, no studies to date compare the self-sponsored and assigned writing of the same writers in both home and school settings.

Researchers in the sociology of literacy view context at the broader level of environment or culture. They enter communities or settings to describe the components of these situations and how these interact to create meaning for the participants. Although they agree that context is worthy of study, their definition of context and goals for research are somewhat different. Their frequent concern with early literacy offers further perspective and raises further questions for the present study.

Most notably, these researchers highlight the finding that self-sponsored writing often differs dramatically from that which is typically assigned in school. Heath (1980) found such differences between secondary students' writing at school and in the community. Bissex (1980) may be

alone, however, in conducting a longitudinal study of one child's development as a writer from preschool through grade 5. She found that while her son wrote short, monotonous sentences to accompany pictures for his second grade teacher's examination, his self-sponsored writing at home was far more inventive, mature, and communicative. It also revealed a different range of audiences, purposes, and genres than those reported by other researchers for assigned writing.

Bissex noticed two important developmental shifts which have implications for the present research: 1) her son became aware of a wider range of audiences after grade 2, and 2) school appeared to restrict his freewheeling writing style at home until about grade 4 when he again began to write extensively on his own. Although Bissex mentions this effect of schooling on her son's self-sponsored writing, her view of his writing in school is limited to the perspective of a mother in the home. A view from both home and school settings may provide further insights.

Within the classroom, Clark and Florio (1982) and Fiering (1981) found that children engaged in self-sponsored writing that was quite different from their regular, assigned writing. In fact, Fiering came to believe that an important distinction has been clouded by the common dichotomy of school versus home writing: self-sponsored writing occurs in many settings. Purposes and genres of self-sponsored writing in school were more like self-sponsored writing at home than assigned writing. Teachers in both studies commonly overlooked or denied the importance of such products as "real" writing.

Finally, on a broader level, previous researchers from all three perspectives rely on etic interpretations of context, drawing conclusions from observations or product analysis. However, when children's

perceptions of context are to be considered, their viewpoints, or emic interpretations, must be sought. In a three-year study of family literacy, Taylor (1981) found that children construct their own functions for self-sponsored writing by using it in their daily lives. Holdaway (1979) cautions that "for the child, all language is doing something...it is meaning...a range of functions which the adult does not normally think of as meaningful" (p. 17). Fiering (1981) also suggests that "similarity of literacy use does not imply similarity of function. In other words, although children often appear to use literacy in ways identical to adult use, the underlying functions may differ" (p. H-8). Thus, to understand the contexts of children's writing, we must see the world from their eyes. Categories imposed from previous research or generated by the researcher alone may miss important distinctions. Although young children may have difficulty reflecting on past writing situations and self-reports may not be exactly similar to what is in their minds, their insights are essential for describing developing perceptions of writing in context.

Purpose

Theory and research support the need for studies of the contexts of writing (Birnbaum, 1981; Clark & Florio, 1982; Fiering, 1981; Graves, 1981; Kantor, Kirby, & Goetz, 1981; King, 1978; Kinneavy, 1971; Moffett, 1968). Although research has described some aspects of context for some settings, none has attempted to describe the range of contextual factors surrounding the same children's written products in a variety of settings. The present study includes both self-sponsored and assigned writings in home and school settings and, with the assistance of subjects, an analysis of the writings for major contextual differences. The investigation involved the following tasks: 1) identifying children in grades 1 through 5 who were currently

writing at both home and school, 2) collecting and analyzing the written products of these children both independently and with the insights gained through interviews with the children, 3) delineating categories of contextual factors which these children perceived for their writing, and 4) examining patterns among these factors within common writing situations.

Method

The nature of this research suggested the use of qualitative research design and methodology. Graves (1981) recommends various levels of focus within the same study to add depth to our view of writing in context. The inverted pyramid design used here concentrated attention first upon the community of children in several classrooms and schools and then, through "criterion-based selection" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) and "theoretical sampling" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), focused upon a gradually smaller number of students whose products contributed most to the emerging theory. This paper reports the findings of the latter phases of the study.

Subjects

A questionnaire about writing was completed by 1395 children in three elementary schools in a middle-class, suburban school district in the Southeast. From 114 children selected for small group interviews, twenty were chosen for the study, two boys and two girls at each grade 1-5. They confirmed their questionnaire responses revealing that they often wrote in a range of contexts, showed that they were sufficiently verbal to provide further information about their writing, proved to be comfortable in interactions with the researcher, and expressed an interest in sharing their writing with her. These children were admittedly unique cases (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) in that they were set apart from other children as

avidly self-sponsored writers. The categories of the five contextual factors developed here were based on interviews with all twenty children.

For the final phase of the study--a closer examination of patterns among the contextual factors--ten children, one boy and one girl per grade, were selected from the original twenty because they provided richer information than the others. Basically, these children contributed more products and/or wrote for a wider range of categories than their same age/same sex peer. In this phase of the study, both the widest divergence as well as the most balanced picture of these children's writing were sought.

Data Collection Procedures

Between December 1983 and March 1984, the twenty subjects, with help from their parents and teachers, collected the children's written products. I provided folders for this collection and asked participants to consider each folder as a "trash can" in which they should place anything on which the child had written. Writing was defined for participants, both orally and in writing, as "any product resulting from the child's putting pencil or other writing instrument to paper or other writing surface". As a result, products collected for the study include drawing, scribbling, words, and short sentences or fragments as well as longer papers.

After collecting products for two to four weeks, children brought their folders to school on a rotating schedule so that each child was interviewed every three weeks between January and March 1984. I reviewed the folders prior to interviews to gain a sense of their contents and to select approximately 50 products for discussion. This number was adequate, but not too overwhelming, for each one-hour interview. Single examples of repetitious items such as reading dittos or math papers were used as

representative samples of that type when children confirmed that such products did indeed represent all other such products. All other writing was included no matter how obscure it may have appeared. The selected products were numbered, recorded, described, and photocopied so that originals, often currently in use, could be returned to the children at the interview. In all, over 2500 products were selected for discussion, averaging 125 per child and ranging from 42 to 194 products per child.

During the week following collection of products, I interviewed each child during the school day. Approximately 60 hours of taped interviews and accompanying notes were compiled. Each interview involved five separate "stackings" of products by categories which the children named for the following contextual factors and corresponding questions:

1) Ownership--who decided that you would do this?
2) Setting--where were you when you wrote this?
3) Audience--who was your audience? who saw this?
4) Purpose--what were your reasons for writing?
5) Genre--what kind of writing is this?

For example, a child first called out categories of ownership for all papers ("I decided to do number 50. My teacher told me to do number 51.") and then reviewed the same papers for setting categories ("I wrote number 50 in my playhouse. Number 51 we did at the reading center.") and so on. Each product was thus defined five times, once for each contextual factor.

No new information was collected for the final phase of the study; instead, the interview data concerning ten children's 1400 products were manipulated in depth to examine relations among the contextual factors.

Data Analysis

Categories of contextual factors

The inductive, "constant comparative" method for data analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) best suited the goals of this study. Through

simultaneous data collection, coding, and analysis, I sought to describe both the categories of contextual factors and their relations. I derived the categories and their attributes, but they were "abstracted from the language of the research situation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 107). Subjects therefore provided the emic categories which they perceived, but I summarized and combined categories and looked for patterns across interviews and children as data analysis progressed. All category names given by all twenty children were accounted for. Categories of contextual factors thus obtained are presented in the Appendix.

Categories for ownership, setting, and genre were generally clear and could be accepted as the children stated them. However, Britton et al. (1975) and Clark and Florio (1982) found a "double audience" for many children's products: an intended audience as well as those who actually saw the product. Actual audiences were more common in the present study, but intended audiences were classified, when given, assuming they reflected the broadest level of the child's perception of audience. Also, although rhetorical and sociological researchers identify "functions" of children's writing from the researchers' theoretical viewpoints, I chose to classify writer's purposes here because writers' intentions were not intuited but derived from their own statements.

Patterns of contextual factors

The final phase of the study was designed to examine developmental patterns among the five contextual factors. I used ownership and setting as fulcrums for discussion because most research in children's writing hinges on these factors. They also provide a concrete ground for each writing experience within which other factors may vary and by which, we might expect, they may be influenced. As a result, three common "writing

situations" provide the matrix within which audience, purpose, and genre are discussed. (Less common writing situations involving "invited" writing are discussed in [redacted], 1984.) These situations include:

1) self-sponsored writing at home and in the community,
2) self-sponsored writing in school,
3) assigned writing usually in school.

At this point, research questions were specifically phrased as follow: 1) How are these writing situations similar in audience, purpose, and genre? 2) How are they different? 3) How are these similarities and differences affected by grade level?

To facilitate the manipulation of this amount of data, information was entered into a data-based management system, PFS: FILE (Page & Roberts, 1981) and PFS: REPORT (Page, 1981). Each of the 1400 files in the system represented a single product and identified writer, sex, grade, and codings for each contextual factor. The management system allowed for rapid retrieval of information from these files in a variety of combinations for any or all factors and combinations of them.

Findings

The number of categories listed by grade are assumed to represent the range of these children's perceptions of context. Where types of categories given are relevant, they are discussed further. Some general findings about the ownership and setting categories alone are of interest. Within ownership categories, most of the children's writing was assigned. Most writing overall (approximately 1000 products) was done at school with a great deal less (approximately 300 products) done at home or in the community (100 products). Further details are reported in [redacted], 1984.

Audiences across writing situations

Numbers of audience categories given for assigned and self-sponsored writing are presented in Table 1. Table 2 presents audience differences in self-sponsored writing at home and school. At each grade level, more audiences were listed for self-sponsored writing than for assigned writing. Although all categories of audiences were mentioned for self-sponsored writing, two were never mentioned for assigned writing: related peers and unrelated adults. Children appeared to find more audiences for their self-sponsored writing than for that which was assigned.

(Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here.)

More importantly, however, a gradual expansion in types of audiences was evident in two ways. First, audiences for older children were less limited to the setting in which the writing occurred, especially in self-sponsored writing. Gradually children shared their writing with audiences beyond the immediate writing situation. At the same time, audiences for both self-sponsored and assigned writing moved beyond simple, known audiences to broader ones. Audiences for older children in this study often included more than one person and/or persons they knew less well.

Purposes across writing situations

Table 3 shows the number of purposes for assigned and self-sponsored writing mentioned by these ten children. Again, at each grade level, a greater number of purposes was given for self-sponsored writing than for assigned writing. This suggests that these children found a wider range of reasons to write when they chose to do so on their own. All categories of purposes were mentioned for self-sponsored writing at some grade. However, five purposes did not appear for assigned writing including writing for

public display, to show to someone, to use as a functional object, to announce something, and to express emotions.

(Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here.)

Within self-sponsored writing, two trends are of interest. First, between first and fifth grades, children mentioned progressively more purposes for their self-sponsored writing, a total of 10 in first grade but 18 by fifth grade. Older children either found more reasons to write on their own or were better able to verbalize these reasons. In the latter case for example, all children wrote many products out of boredom; however, older children, more often than younger ones, suggested other purposes for writing beyond boredom alone.

Secondly, Table 4 reveals that while the number of purposes for self-sponsored writing at home decreased from grades 1 to 3, the number of purposes cited for self-sponsored writing at school increased across these grades. From grades 3 to 5, purposes for writing at home expand again while purposes for writing at school first stabilize and then expand in tandem with purposes for writing at home. Thus, older children not only found more purposes for self-sponsored writing, but they were also able to find outlets for these purposes in both home and school settings. The dramatic shift in purposes for self-sponsored writing at home in early grades to school in grades 2 and 3 is discussed below.

Genres across writing situations

Table 5 presents the number of categories of genres mentioned by these ten children for self-sponsored and assigned situations. As with categories of audiences and purposes, children at each grade suggested more genres for their self-sponsored writing than for assigned writing. All categories of genres were mentioned for self-sponsored writing. Assigned

writing, however, did not include games, props for adult role playing, newspapers, names, or writing in other forms of print. The number of categories of genres listed for assigned writing is lower for first graders but remains fairly constant at all other grades.

(Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here.)

Interestingly, first graders mentioned as many genres for self-sponsored writing as did fifth graders. These first graders were not more prolific self-sponsored writers than older children; their difference appears to lie in the fact that their self-sponsored writing is done mostly at home. For example, Table 6 reveals that children in both first and fifth grades listed more genres for self-sponsored writing done at home than at school whereas in grades 2 and 3 the opposite is true, and in grade 4 the number is more equal for both settings. The number of genres listed for self-sponsored writing at school remains fairly constant across all grades. However, the number of genres for self-sponsored writing at home decreases between grades 1 and 2 but increases by grade 5. This finding strikingly parallels earlier developmental shifts for audience and purpose.

Discussion

This study was based on an assumption that children themselves could best determine the contextual factors of their writing. The twenty children selected for the study were quite capable of categorizing their written products by ownership, setting, audience, purpose, and genre. In fact, their insights could not have been gained from product analysis or observations alone. As a result, the categories derived from interview data suggest a new perspective on contextual factors in the writing of young children. The examination of the interrelationships of these factors

highlights developing and expanding perceptions of the contexts of writing across the elementary school years.

The children in this study also revealed that although much of children's writing is assigned in a school setting, at least some children also choose to write both at home and at school. Previous researchers examined the nature of this self-sponsored writing in the home (Bissex, 1980; Taylor, 1981) or the school (Clark & Florio, 1982; Fiering, 1981; Graves, 1973), but the present study shows further that the same children engage in self-sponsored writing in both settings.

Several previous researchers (Applebee, 1978; Bissex, 1980; Britton et al., 1975; Clark & Florio, 1982; Fiering, 1982; Moffett, 1968; Petty & Finn, 1981) reveal the limits of assigned writing. Because assigned writing was compared here to self-sponsored writing, it becomes clear that although these young children wrote for many audiences, purposes, and genres in assigned situations, their self-sponsored writing provided them with a wider range of contextual experiences. At all grades, children's perceptions of contextual factors were consistently broader for self-sponsored writing than for assigned writing. Also, while the number or types of categories for each factor remained fairly stable for assigned writing after first grade, the number of categories listed for self-sponsored writing continued to expand. Heath (1980), in her study of the functions of literacy within a community, found that "learners frequently possess and display in out-of-school contexts skills relevant to using literacy which are not effectively exploited in school learning environments" (p. 131). The present study suggests that the range of contextual factors perceived expands more in self-sponsored writing.

Finally, the data from this study support the appearance of a pattern for self-sponsored writing which may be more consciously developing at home in the early grades, shift toward school around grade 3, but equalize for both settings by grade 5. Bissex (1980) noted that her son's self-sponsored writing at home diminished as he entered school but blossomed again after third grade. She credits this resurgence to an oustanding teacher's interest. However, Bissex did not consistently observe his self-sponsored writing at school. Like the children in the present study, her son may have simply shifted his involvement in self-sponsored writing to the school setting, finding audiences, purposes, and genres for writing beyond the home by grade 3. That Bissex noted a renewed interest in self-sponsored writing at home in the later elementary years parallels the more balanced range of awareness of writing in both settings by the older children in this study.

Implications for Teaching

Clark and Florio (1982) hypothesize that classrooms everywhere may contain informal and largely unarticulated writing curricula. Both they and Fiering (1981) suggest that children do a great deal of writing within their classrooms that is unrecognized by teachers. The present study reveals that some children are indeed self-sponsored writers both at home and at school. In order to tap this resource, teachers should identify children who write extensively and accept and encourage such self-sponsored writing, in whatever form it occurs, as valuable writing experiences.

Data analysis for the present study does not at this point reveal whether or not the expanding awareness of contextual factors of writing influences content, style, or writing processes. However, awareness of audience and purpose as controlling factors of mature writing are cited by

most writing teachers and rhetoric texts. Rubin (1984) suggests that development in writing may be seen in large part as the acquisition of a repertoire of discourse forms and purposes and the ability to determine which conventions, styles, and registers are appropriate for various contexts of written communication. This assumption appears to be substantiated by the present study; these children, across grades 1 through 5, did expand their perceptions of the range of purposes and genres with age although it is not clear if their products were thereby different. However, although chldren in this study wrote for a range of audiences, purposes, and genres within school assignments, they experienced a wider range of these contextual factors in their self-sponsored writing. Therefore, we might hypothesize that children who write only for school assignments do not experience or are not aware of the potential influence of these factors and may remain somewhat limited in their repertoire for writing. Although dealing only with assigned writing, Britton et al. (1975) express a similar interest in such self-sponsored writing believing that it "provides an important link with mature adult writing" (p. 23).

Two implications for teaching arise here. First, teachers should help children discover their own real audiences and purposes for writing and experiment in a wide range of useful genres. However, the present study reveals that children do construct their own contexts for writing. Therefore, a simple imposition of audiences, purposes, and genres for assigned writing may not adequately fill this need. Children should be encouraged to find needs for writing which arise from their own interactions in the classroom and beyond. Restructuring the classroom to allow for real, rather than assigned, constraints may allow children a more natural, and in fact extensive, development as writers.

Implications for Research

One of the major purposes of qualitative research is to raise questions as well as to answer them. The present study was limited to a description of five contextual factors and some interrelations among them for the writing of twenty young, middle-class children. The study was not designed to be generalizable to other groups or to analyze individual products for differences related to the contextual factors examined. Although many areas could be investigated, the following may have the most immediate implications for future research:

1) How do products differ within common writing situations? Both rhetoricians (Bitzer, 1976) and linguists (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) suggest that if we know the features of a situation, we may be able to predict the structure of texts. An analysis of products and interview data for this study and similar ones may provide insights into content and stylistic differences that may be affected by variations in contextual factors and writers' developing perceptions of them.

2) How do self-sponsored writers differ in their awareness of contextual factors of writing from children who are less involved in self-sponsored writing? Birnbaum (1981), Emig (1971), and Fie[illegible] 1981) all hypothesize that the writing of children who engage in self-sponsored writing differs from that of children who do not. The present study suggests that this is true, especially if the writing of some children is limited to that done in school-assigned situations. Not only products may differ, however. We might also expect non-self-sponsored writers to have a more limited awareness of contextual factors which may restrict their abilities to adapt to new writing situations. Thus, we might ask if self-sponsored writers are more likely to become succesful adult writers, and if

so, what can they teach us about the teaching of writing? Research designed to compare two such groups over time may add needed insights into the development of successful and less successful writers.

3) How do children in the present study compare to those in other environments? More baseline data are needed to test the conclusions of this study for a wider range of children. Replication of this study in different settings may illuminate and clarify both the contextual categories defined here and the interrelations among them.

4) How does self-sponsored writing at home and at school change for children between grades 1 and 5? This study suggests a shifting awareness of self-sponsored writing from home to school to both settings across the elementary grade years which may supplement Bissex's (1980) findings. Further research is necessary to support this pattern.

There are, of course, many other questions that need to be asked about the contexts of writing and writers' developing perceptions of them. As more and more theorists and researchers consider the influence of context on writing, perhaps we can discover ways to help children retain the freshness of their written language while adapting it appropriately to meet the demands of adult writing situations.

REFERENCES

Applebee, A.N. (1978) A survey of teaching conditions in English, 1977. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearninghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English.

Birnbaum, J. (1981) The reading and composing behaviors of selected fourth and seventh grade students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University.

Bissex, G.L. (1980) GYNS at work: A child learns to write and read. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bitzer, L. (1976). The rhetorical situation. In J.L. Golden, G.F. Berquist, & W.E. Coleman (Eds.), The rhetoric of western thought (pp. 15-21). Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt Publishing Co. (Reprinted from Philosophy and Rhetoric, 1968, 1, 1-15.

Britton, J., Burgess, T., Martin, N., McLeod, A., & Rosen, H. (1975) The development of writing abilities, 11-18. London: Macmillan Company.

Clark, C.M. & Florio, S. (1982) Understanding writing in school: A descriptive study of writing and its instruction in two classrooms (National Institute of Education Grant No. 90840). East Lansing, Michigan: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University.

Emig, J. (1971) The composing processes of twelfth graders. (Research Report No. 13). Urbana, IL: national Council of Teachers of English.

Fiering, S. (1981) Commodore School: Unofficial writing. Ethnographic monitering of children's acquisition of reading/language arts skills in and out of the classroom. D.H. Hymes, principal investigator. Final report to the National Institute of Education.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine Publishing Co.

Graves, D.H. (1973) Children's writing: Research directions and hypotheses based upon an examination of the writing processes of seven year old children. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo.

Graves, D.H. (1981) A new look at research on writing. In S. Haley-James (Ed.), Perspectives on writing in grades 1-8. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Gundlach, R.A., Litowitz, B.E., & Moses, R.A. (1979) The ontogenesis of the writer's sense of audience: Rhetorical theory and children's written discourse. In R.L. Brown, Jr., & M. Steinmann, Jr. (Eds.), Rhetoric 78: Proceedings of theory of rhetoric: An interdisciplinary conference. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Language, Style, and Literary Theory.

Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. (1976) Cohesion in English. London: Longmans.

Harste, J.D., & Carey, R.F. (1984). Classrooms, constraints, and the language process. In J. Floor (Ed.), Promoting reading comprehension. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Heath, S.B. (1980). The functions and uses of literacy. Journal of Communications, 30, 122-132.

Holdaway, D. (1979) The foundations of literacy. New York: Scholastic Book Services.

Kantor, K.J., Kirby, D., & Goetz, J. (1981) Research in context: Ethnographic studies in English education. Research in the Teaching of English, 15, 293-309.

King, M. L. (1978) Research in composition: A need for theory. Research in the Teaching of English, 12, 193-202.

Kinneavy, J.L. (1971) A theory of discourse. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

LeCompte, M.D., & Goetz, J.P. (1982). Sampling and selection issues in educational ethnography. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 217049)

Macrorie, K. (1970). Uptaught. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company Inc.

Moffett, J. (1968) Teaching the universe of discourse. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Page, J. (1981). PFS: REPORT. (Computer program). Mt. View, CA: Software Publishing Corporation.

Page, J., & Roberts, D.D. (1981). PFS: FILE. (Computer program). Mt. View, CA: Softward Publishing Corporation.

Petty, W.T., & Finn, P.J. (1981) Classroom teachers' reports on teaching written composition. In S. Haley-James (Ed.), Perspectives on writing in grades 1-8. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Rubin, D.L. (1984). The effects of communicative context on style in writing. In A. Pellegrini & T. Yawkey (Eds.), The development of oral and written language: Readings in applied and developmental psycholinguistics. Totowa, NJ: Ablex.

Taylor, D. (1983) Family literacy: The social context of learning to read and write. Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1981. Also published as Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Whale, K.B. & Robinson, S. (1978) Modes of students' writings: A descriptive study. Research in the Teaching of English, 12, 349-355.

(NOTE: Dissertation reference deleted for this submission.)

APPENDIX
CATEGORIES OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

I. Ownership
- A. Self-sponsored (child decided to write)
- B. Assigned (child was required to write)
  1. By teacher (teacher determined content, form)
  2. By special teachers (gifted, music, substitute, counselor)
- C. Invited (child was encouraged, but not required, to write)
  1. Teacher and me (child had choice in assignment)
  2. Adult, unrelated (church, club leader)
  3. Adult, related (parent, grandparent)
  4. Peer, unrelated (friend, not a school relationship)
  5. Peer, related (sibling, cousin)
  6. Peers and adults (family, combinations of adults and peers)
- D. Someone else and me (shared decision, not with teacher)

II. Setting
- A. School
  1. Classroom (desk, centers, floor, reading area)
  2. Other instructional spaces (music, art, library)
  3. Other school spaces (cafeteria, hall, restroom)
- B. Home
- C. Community
  1. Organized (church, clubs, daycare)
  2. Not organized (friend's home, sports event, parent's office)
  3. On the move (in car, on bus, short or long trips)
- D. Home and school (partly written in both places)
- E. Two places, not school (out of school, but not in one place)

III. Audience
- A. School
  1. Adults at school (teacher, other special teacher)
  2. Peers at school (peer's role is as a school entity)
  3. Adult(s) and peer(s) at school
- B. Home and community
  1. Adults, related (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles)
  2. Adults, unrelated (church, President Reagan, Santa, judges)
  3. Peers, related (siblings, cousins)
  4. Peers, unrelated (friend, penpal, famous peer, pet)
  5. Adult(s) and peer(s) (related or not, combinations)
- C. Self (no real or intended audience beyond the self)
- D. General
  1. Anyone (people to see by chance because product available)
  2. Everyone (wide audience intended)
- E. School/home combinations
  1. School/home adult combinations (such as teacher and mom)
  2. School/home adults and peers (reading group and parents)
- F. Someone else and me (as much for self as others)

IV. Purpose
- A. To fulfill a requirement
  1. Had to do, told to do at school
  2. Had to do, told to do by someone outside of school
- B. To interact with others

1. To communicate (one information bit, "tell to get well")
2. To inform (more information than communication)
3. To entertain (for people to read and enjoy)
4. To announce (distributed or hung up, to reach many people)
5. To complete work with another (joint authorship)

C. To share an object to be admired
1. To give to someone (presented to a person to be kept)
2. To show to someone (audience is just to look at it)
3. For public display (for admiration rather than information)

D. To create
1. To draft, to make, to write (just to be doing it)
2. To experiment with materials for writing (no other goal)

E. To facilitate
1. To use product as an object (library record, mail holder)
2. To remember (to record so as not to forget)
3. To learn (understanding something through writing)
4. To get something in return (tangible object)
5. To avoid (to cause something not to happen)
6. To enter, compete (contests, fairs, clubs)

F. Bored (want to, nothing to do, just for fun, to occupy time)

G. To play (game, general play, role playing such as waitress)

H. To express emotion (anger, frustration, kindness, or thinking)

I. Combinations

VI. Genres

A. School writing
1. School subjects (reading, science)
2. Generic types (assignment, ditto, homework)
3. School "work" (learning, work, morning work)
4. Unsure forms (specifies directions or topics)

B. Common forms
1. Fiction (book, story, tall tale, make-believe)
2. Non-fiction (report, experience, opinion)
3. Communication (letter, valentine, card, note)
4. Record (scrapbook, directory, log, record, map)
5. Game (Dungeons and Dragons, word hunt, scores)
6. Props for playing adult roles (order, work page, test)
7. Newspaper (newletter, article)
8. Performance piece (routine or recital, song, program, play)
9. Poetry (poem, rhymes, riddles, limmericks)
10. Forms for completion (questionnaire, interview, forms)
11. Objects for functional use (folder, bookmark, sign, tickets)
12. Names (name, signature, name stamp)
13. Comics and cartoons (drawing with written dialogue)
14. Lists (grades, lines to remember, characters, club members)
15. Reminders (brief reminders, jot lists)
16. Brief markings (alphabet, numbers, words, sentences)
17. Rough draft (draft, messup, mistake, experiment)

C. Mostly art
1. Drawing (coloring, picture, collage, painting, art)
2. Scribbling (scribble-scrabble, jotting, nothing, doodling)
3. Other forms of print (typing, computer printout)

D. Combinations

Table 1

Number of Audiences Children Cited for Self-Sponsored and Assigned Writing by Grade Level

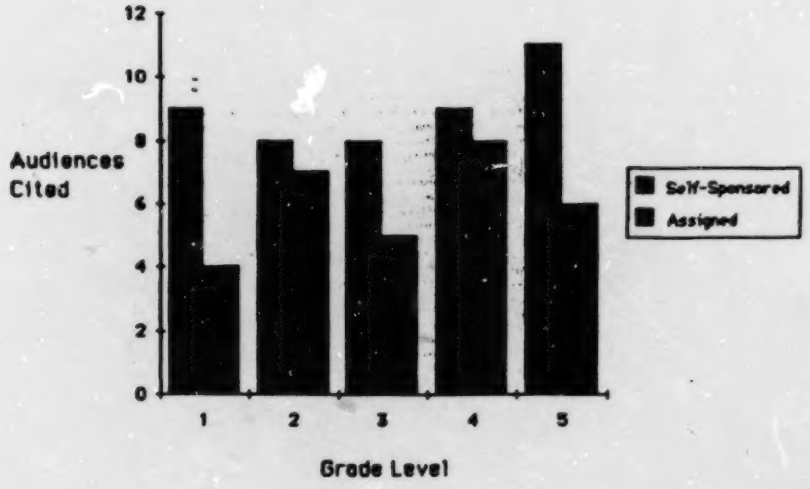

Table 2

Number of Audiences Children Cited for Self-Sponsored Writing at Home or at School by Grade Level

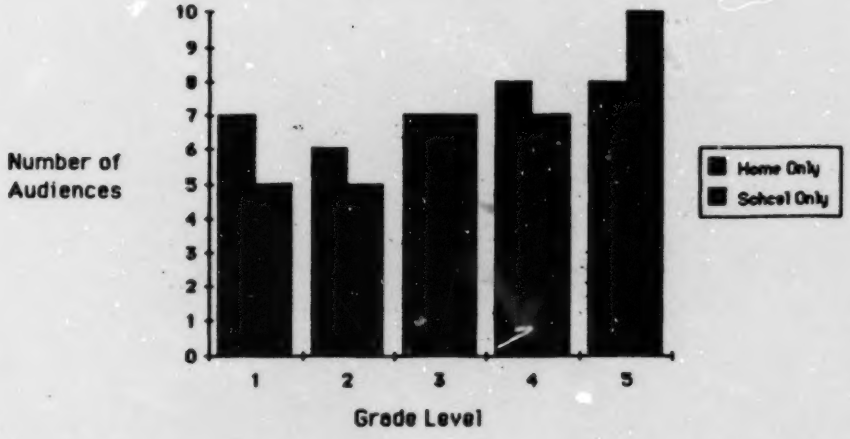

Table 3

Number of Purposes Children Cited for Self-Sponsored and Assigned Writing by Grade Level

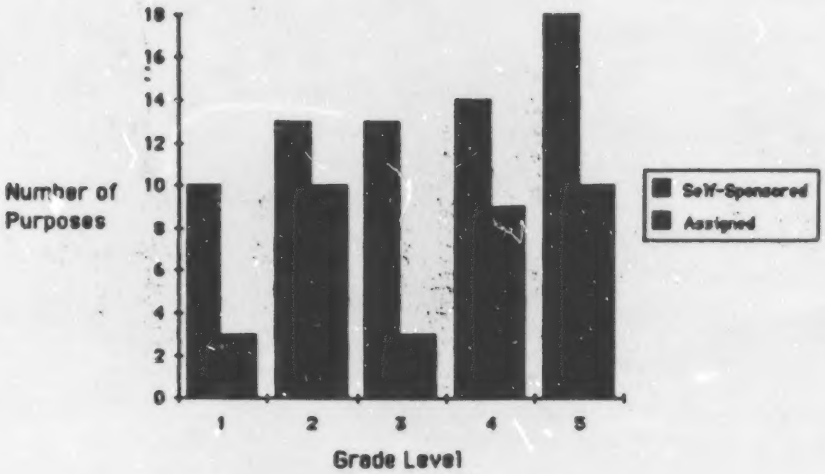

Table 4

Number of Purposes Children Cited for Self-Sponsored Writing at Home or at School

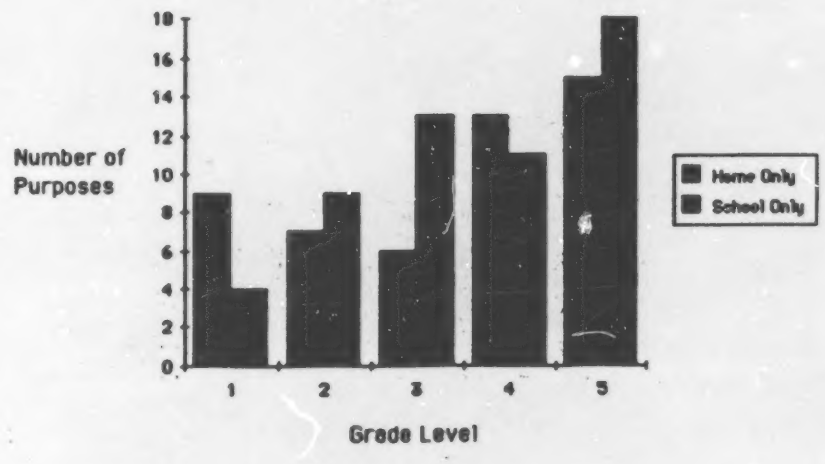

Table 5

Number of Genres Children Cited for Self-Sponsored and Assigned Writing by Grade Level

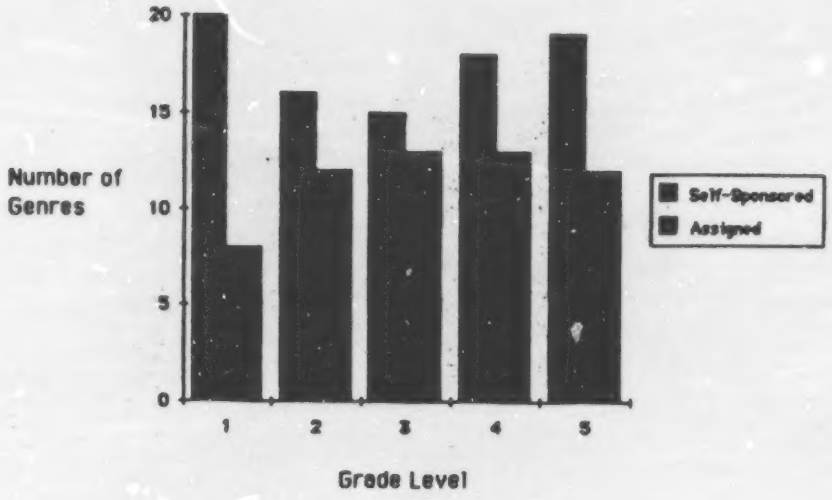

Table 6

Number of Genres Children Cited for Self-Sponsored Writing at Home or School by Grade Level